

HOME & DESIGN

HOME OF THE TIMES

Earthbound house floats into the trees

By Lisa Boone >>> Some homeowners crave folding glass walls that extend the indoors outside. Others prefer floor-to-ceiling glass windows that bring the outdoors in. Yaniv and Nina Tepper wanted to see *through* their 1956 ranch home to better experience their Laurel Canyon environment.

“We wanted indoor-outdoor flow to connect to the canyon,” says Yaniv, a partner at the Angelo Group, a private equity firm that invests in clean energy. Set on a lush hillside in Wonderland Park, the couple’s unremarkable house failed to live up to the impressive midcentury gems in the neighborhood, such as Pierre Koenig’s Case Study House 21. To help them reimagine the four-bedroom, three-bath home, Yaniv and Nina, a child psychologist, enlisted architect David Thompson of Assembledge+, who was deeply influenced by the historic enclave. “The neighborhood was created by landscape designer Garrett Eckbo and was built on inclusion,” Thompson explains. “You can’t help but be a good neighbor when you are up against something as impressive as a Case Study House.”

Joining inside and out

Among the house’s flaws to be addressed: a choppy floor plan and a dark and cramped kitchen and dining area. Worst of all: There was little connection between the house and the outdoors. Thompson’s goal was to create a “unified living experience on the ground level” that connected the house to the front and back yards.

He began by removing the wall between the dining room and the master suite to create a family room that extends to the pool. This simple move opened up the house and expanded the floor plan, making an immediate connection between the front and rear yards.

Thompson then added a second-floor master bedroom suite that appears to float above the family room. Its separation from the house gives the floor plan below a sense of freedom.

On the ground floor, Thompson left the children’s wing intact for Talia, 14, and Mayan, 8, and installed a bedroom and bathroom for Aiden, 17, between the family room and the home’s garage-turned-media-room.

Now the first floor has direct access to the front courtyard and the backyard courtesy of floor-to-ceiling aluminum sliding doors that are like moving windows. The front corner of the house is exposed to allow light and air in and offers sightlines through the house to the backyard.

A glimmer of sunlight

The transparency continues upstairs in the master suite and bath, where the floating rooms connect to the trees courtesy of frameless, glass-cornered windows.

“It’s supposed to be a treehouse,” Thompson explains. “That’s why the house is clad in red cedar and the master bedroom rises.”

In another thoughtful move, Thompson installed a slim glass skylight between the original house and the additions. It adds a glimmer of sunlight to the ground floor and highlights the collision of old and new.

It’s a juxtaposition that is not lost on Thompson.

“I wanted to engage all the pieces,” Thompson says. “The front yard is an experience. The backyard is an experience. Yet they all flow together and connect.”

Because smart home devices were important to the homeowners, the update includes NEST thermal controllers with energy-efficient settings; a home automation system that controls lighting, audio, alarm and cameras; an electric charging station connected to solar panels; thermal films on glass; and digital real-time metering for electricity and water.

Modern yet relaxed, the result — with help from interior designer Vanessa Alexander and landscape designer Mike Fiore — is rustic, modern and family-friendly.

Thompson refers to it as “California Modernism,” a new identity he hopes will honor the historic neighborhood.

“We were always trying to keep the spirit of this beautiful enclave alive,” Thompson says. “We wanted to keep the torch going.”

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THE TEPPER house’s backyard and pool before the renovation.



Photographs by CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

NINA AND YANIV Tepper opened up their ranch house with a sliding wall of glass that connects the family room to the backyard.



THE NEW SECOND-FLOOR master bedroom, left, has the airy feel of a treehouse. A sitting area, above, and smart controls that command a television to appear make the area the parents’ sanctuary.



THE MASTER SUITE addition, clad in red cedar, rises from the renovated 1956 ranch house. A sliver of glass marks the transition.



THE FAMILY of five tends to congregate at the island in the now-airy kitchen, above left. Talia Tepper, 14, relaxes in her room.